

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A joint connector (JC), comprising a housing (30) with at least one pair of connecting portions (33, 38) into which mating connectors (10, 20) are fittable, at least one joint terminal (60; 60A-D) having a plurality of terminal pieces (55B) located in both connecting portions (33, 38) and at least one ground terminal (50) having a grounding portion (52) and a plurality of terminal pieces (55A) in at least one of the connecting portions (33; 38).

2. The joint connector of claim 1, wherein the joint terminal (60; 60A-D) is formed such that the terminal pieces (55B) project from two different lateral edges of a busbar (51).

3. The joint connector of claim 1, wherein the ground terminal (50) is formed such that the terminal pieces (55A) project from at least one lateral edge of a busbar (51) having the grounding portion (52) at an end thereof.

4. The joint connector of claim 1, wherein the joint terminal (60; 60A-D) and the ground terminal (50) are mounted at different levels in the housing (30).

5. The joint connector of claim 1, wherein the joint terminal (60; 60A-D) is mounted into the housing (30) by pressing.

6. The joint connector of claim 5, wherein the housing (30) comprises insertion grooves (41) into which at least part of the joint terminal (60) is closely insertable.

7. The joint connector of claim 6, wherein press-in holes (43) are provided in the housing (30) for pressing in corresponding terminal pieces (55A; 55B) of the joint terminal (60; 60A-D).

8. A joint connector (JC), comprising:

a housing (30) molded from a resin material and having opposite power and load sides, an intermediate wall (40) between the power and load sides, a power receptacle (33) extending into the power side and to the intermediate wall (40), at least one load receptacle (38) extending into the load side and to the intermediate wall (40), a plurality of press-in holes (43) formed in the intermediate wall (40) for providing communication between the power and load receptacles (33, 38);

a grounding terminal (50) having a bus bar (51) and a plurality of terminal pieces (55A) projecting from one side of the bus bar (51), the grounding terminal (50) being insert molded into the housing (30) so that the bus bar (51) is substantially surrounded by a unitary matrix of resin in the intermediate wall (40) and so that the terminal pieces (55A) project into the at least one load receptacle (38); and

at least one joint terminal (60; 60A-D) having a bus bar (51) and plurality of terminal pieces (55B) projecting from both opposite sides of the bus bar (51), the terminal pieces (55B) on one side of the bus bar (51) being pressed through selected ones of the press-in holes (43) and into the load side receptacle (38).

9. The joint connector of claim 8, wherein the intermediate wall (40) of the housing (30) comprises insertion grooves (41) facing into the load side receptacle (33), the bus bar (51) of the joint terminal (60) being closely received in the insertion groove (41).

10. The joint connector of claim 9, wherein at least one press-in hole (43) has no terminal piece (55B) therein.

11. The joint connector of claim 9, wherein the joint terminal (60; 60A-D) and the ground terminal (50) are mounted at different levels in the housing (30).

12. A method of manufacturing a joint connector (JC), comprising:

providing a grounding terminal (50) having a bus bar (51), a plurality of terminal pieces (55A) projecting from one side of the bus bar (51) and a grounding portion (52) at an end of the bus bar (51)

molding a housing (30) from a resin material so that the housing (30) has oppositely facing connecting receptacles (33, 38) separated by an intermediate wall (40) and so that the bus bar (51) of the grounding terminal (50) is insert molded in the intermediate wall (40) with the terminal pieces (55A) projecting into one of the connecting receptacles (38);

providing at least one joint terminal (60A-D) having a bus bar (51) and plurality of terminal pieces (55B) projecting from both opposite sides of the bus bar (51); and

mounting the joint terminal (60A-D) through the intermediate wall (40) so that the terminal pieces (55B) project into both connecting receptacles (33, 38).

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the step of molding the housing (30) comprises forming press-in holes (43) in the intermediate wall (40) at all possible positions for the terminal pieces (55B) of the joint terminal (60A-D).

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the step of providing at least one joint terminal (60A-D) comprises providing a plurality of different joint terminals (60A-D), the method further comprising selecting specified joint terminals (60A-D), and mounting the selected joint terminals (60A-D) in the housing (30) so that the terminal pieces (55A) are press fit through only selected ones of the press-fit holes (43).

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the step of providing the ground terminal (50) comprises providing a grounding terminal (50) with a grounding portion (52) at one end of the bus bar (51), and wherein the step of molding the housing (30) comprises molding the housing (30) so that the grounding portion (52) is external of the housing (30).